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Two Huntsman MIS Teams Make it to Finals in Global Competition

By Steve Eaton



Two teams of Huntsman students have made it to the finals of a systems information contest that drew 82 teams from some of the best universities in the world.

The Utah State University students will be going to Bentonville, Ark., to participate in the 2013 Walmart IT Summit and AIS Student Chapter Leadership Conference April 18 – 20. The Association of Information Systems, the organization that is hosting the competition, is a professional group for individuals and organizations that lead the research, teaching, practice, and study of information systems worldwide.

There were 82 teams from 17 universities that entered the contest and just six teams in each of four different categories made it to the finals. Only five universities, counting USU, managed to get more than one team to the championships. Some of the universities that still have teams in the running include Carnegie Mellon University, University of Alabama, Brigham Young University, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, all schools known for their MIS programs.

One team of three Huntsman management information systems (MIS) students, which included Gina Baldazzi, Kristen Tenney, and Kyle Bell, submitted a [training video](#) they created and became finalists in the “interactive learning module” category. The video, which a former student, Marielle Sanchez, helped them create before she graduated in 2012, is aimed at helping people learn how to create an “entity relationship diagram,” which Gina described as “the blue prints for a data base.” She said they wanted to create something that was not too technical so that even those who are not MIS students could understand it.

“We think all business students can learn from this video,” Gina said. “With this training business leaders will know how to better communicate their database needs with the IT professionals who will be helping them.”

David Olsen, who heads the Management Information Systems Department, said that the students were able to hit a “sweet spot” because they identified a critical need which made their project stand out. He said both teams found innovative solutions that earned each of them a place in the finals.



The other team of three MIS students, which included Vishal Patel, Dannaëa Ward, and Eric Schnell, entered the “IT risk identification category” and were asked to do a case study for a fictional health care company that was trying to decide if it should store private patient data in an online secure cloud storage system or on a more traditional protected system.

The team recommended that the company choose an approach where it would use on-demand software that is hosted and maintained online by a third-party vendor.

“With the boom in such cloud offerings, the enterprise world is rapidly moving toward these types of solutions for the benefits they offer and the cost savings they can deliver,” Eric said.

Based on the risks involved with choosing this approach, the team also cautioned the company to set high security standards, to plan a clear exit strategy in case of vendor conflict, and to implement a strict policy to guard against fraud.

“We are happy to represent the MIS department here at USU,” Kristen said. “Getting the Huntsman name out there, especially with two different teams is a big deal to us. It shows that we are getting a quality education, even when compared to other top schools across the nation.”

Dr. Olsen said MIS students at the Huntsman School of Business are prepared to enter the job market when they graduate.

“We have very talented students here and many companies are recognizing that,” Dr. Olsen said. “They now seek out our students because of what they can offer.”

Both teams said they are excited for the opportunity to go to the convention hoping it will open up job opportunities for them.

“The end of the game is to get a good job,” Dannaëa said. “When you add to our formal education competitions like this that offer excellent networking opportunities, it can lead to a very good job.”

Vishal said he wants people to see that Huntsman MIS students can compete with the best.

“We just want to tell people that we are Aggies and we can deliver,” Vishal said. “It’s school pride. We want people to know that are not just famous for our ice cream.”